

EAST PROVIDENCE SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

East Providence, City Hall

145 Taunton Avenue

East Providence, Rhode Island 02914

May 4, 2011

Open Session

Mr. Tsonos called the meeting to order at 6:30PM. School Committee members present: Luisa Abatecola, Stephen Furtado, Chrissy Rossi, Ryan Tellier, Charles Tsonos. Also present: Dr. Mario F. Cirillo, Superintendent of Schools and Andrew Thomas, Esq.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and a Moment of Silence were observed.

Student/Teacher Recognition – East Providence High School World Language students were honored and presented with certificates by Dr. Cirillo; the students recently participated in a Flag raising ceremony at the State House. Dr. Cirillo acknowledged and congratulated their French teacher, Mrs. Cristina Carlotti.

Public Comment I – Motion by Mr. Furtado to open public comment, seconded by Mr. Tellier. Vote 5-0.

Mr. John Bell asked for school and community support regarding an

effort to win a contest sponsored by Kaboom; Waddington Elementary selected as one of the top ten in the nation in the running to win \$15,000 in playground equipment; Waddington in second place right now for number of votes; Mr. Bell requested that everyone vote (deadline May 10th); if in top five at end of contest, Waddington will win \$15,000; he provided flyers and website address to vote every 24 hours.

Carol Silva (Tammy Entwhistle) – representative of executive board of Friends of EP High School Band; nonprofit organized in 1985 to provide volunteers and fundraising. In 2009, the organization was suspended for an audit and to look into allegations which had been brought forth. In 2010, the group was allowed to reorganize under certain requirements by Dr. Cirillo and efforts were made to keep the organization running for the Townie Band. A letter was received in August that this group had to disaffiliate themselves with the band & band director and that no meetings could be held on high school grounds. This parent group had funds available to pay for all students and their parents to attend the banquet which was \$30 per person. The new board requested a meeting with the new School Committee and Dr. Cirillo to try to get the Friends organization up and running again for the benefit of students. The EP band is supposed to be the pride of EP, but the last couple years students have left the program; Mrs. Silva and the group would like to try to restore the pride of the Townie band. Ms. Silva advised that the Band Director would not accept their offer last December to pay for breakfast for

band members, because he said the group was not affiliated with the band.

Dr. Cirillo explained that he recently spoke to the Principal and received information from the Band Director; this has a long story; he is not opposed to spending money, but the priorities of the school and the group are different; he welcomed meeting with Ms. Silva, Ms. Sheehan and the Director to come to some resolution. The recommendation was to buy instruments; the group is willing to pay for the banquet and awards. Ms. Silva felt that the organization is needed to raise funds and they have not been able to do anything. Dr. Cirillo will meet with the group. Ms. Silva felt that the board is being penalized for what happened two boards ago. Discussion: School Committee would like to be involved.

Mr. Tsonos acknowledged teachers during Teacher Recognition Week; he is grateful for our dedicated professionals in the classroom and wanted to let teachers know how much they are appreciated.

Mr. Tsonos announced a beautification project to be held at the Rumford Library; this effort by the Rumford Lions Club will take place on May 22nd at 9AM.

Dr. Cirillo echoed sentiments about the quality of teachers in East Providence and expressed appreciation for their efforts. Over the last three years as Superintendent, his experience has been that even through some difficult financial times, teachers have never veered

from their mission of educating children and always do the best they can; he congratulated them for their hard work, which is apparent every day.

Reports: Superintendent's Report

Organizational Restructuring Phase I & Phase II – tabled to 5/24/11

Career Technical School Transfer - Dr. Cirillo reported on the process of transferring ownership of the CTC building from RIDE to the East Providence School Department and the City. (City Council and School Committee voted in April/May 2010 to approve). The state has made available \$950,000 for improvements; we have received \$157,000 for capital improvements to improve the facility, which funds will address ADA accessibility, building codes, violations on the fire alarm, and security system. We are required to follow Ride requirements on schematic designs, which will allow for expansion of culinary and cosmetology programs in July; the \$15M bond does not include any funds because of the purchase and sales - \$206,000 in ESCO bond funds will go to CTC. We should have final approval from Ride in June and we have been authorized to sign off as soon as approval is given. We are working with SMMA to complete some of the projects; he felt that the best satisfaction of the sale is that we have had culinary equipment in crates for years and within this arrangement, we will begin to use that equipment and have a world class program. The building will be brought up to speed to allow the expansion of programs which will provide more opportunities for students. \$950,000 is guaranteed money; as we provide

documentation to them, the funds are released.

Mr. Tsonos asked why this transfer would be to our advantage at this point in time, when in the past it had been turned down by other School Committees and what were we paying for prior to taking over CTC. Dr. Cirillo said that Ride is divesting themselves of the career/technical schools; they paid only for capital funds; we get about \$296,000 in Perkins funds; Bristol Warren gets a percentage of those funds. The CTC is one of our better buildings; Ride does not want to be landlords any longer; Newport is doing the same. Dr. Cirillo felt this was the right time to do this; it was looked at from every angle and he felt it was a good deal. In response to Mrs. Rossi's question, we will continue to receive Perkin funds and if other districts do not have programs, we can get those students into our program.

Dr. Cirillo further commented that another reason that the CTC is important is that the Governor and the Board of Regents have been supportive of vocational education; although the Commissioner is not as enamored with it. This is another reason to do it; there is a board of advisors; standards are under review and being tightened; state positive about support and funding.

Personnel Report on Retirements/Resignations/Leaves of Absence – Mrs. Whalen presented the personnel items:

Resignation

Tabitha Watchen Flag Corps Coach – High School - Effective 5/31/11

Personal Leave of Absence

**Sandra Forand Principal – Riverside Middle School – Effective 7/1/11
(one year)**

Contingent on Master Mentor Evaluator funding

**Kimberly Laliberte Science Dept. Head – High School – Effective
7/1/11 (one year)**

Contingent on Master Mentor Evaluator funding

Family Medical Leave Act

**Susan Brown Kindergarten – Whiteknact Elementary – Effective
9/9/11 – 13 weeks**

**Tracy Andrews Kindergarten Teacher - Kent Heights – Effective
6/13/11 – 13 weeks**

Consent Agenda

**Approval of Minutes – Motion by Mr. Tellier to approve the minutes of
the meeting held on March 21, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola.**

Vote 5-0. Motion by Mr. Tellier to approve the minutes of the meeting

held on April 12, 2011, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Action Items

Organizational Restructuring Phase I - tabled

Organizational Restructuring Phase II – tabled

Personnel Appointments/Recalls – Mrs. Whalen presented the personnel items:

Appointments

Susan Allienello Secretary - Whiteknact School - Effective 4/25/11

Greg Amore Assistant Baseball Coach – High School

Recall of 11 Teachers laid off solely for budgetary reasons

Discussion regarding the hiring date of April 25th for Mrs. Allienello and the fact that she has already been working before vote of approval by School Committee; discussion regarding the process used to fill positions left vacant due to retirements.

Mrs. Rossi asked if this is always standard practice and what would happen if School Committee did not approve a position when an individual is already in it; she stated that this issue had come up before at least twice about people going into positions without School Committee approval.

Dr. Cirillo advised the hiring are based on his recommendations. Mrs. Rossi commented that if the practice is to go along those lines and the person is already working, but not approved; how can this be tightened up better; if the person is not approved yet, they should be employed as a substitute; she has issues with voting on a position where the person is already working.

Mrs. Whalen stated the practice is that she receives approval from the Budget Director and the Superintendent, pending approval of School Committee; she did not know that she had to wait to fill positions; School Committees once a month are too long to wait

Mrs. Rossi commented that in the last conversation, she thought the School Committee asked to approve positions first before the person starts working; all should be on the same page; there is plenty of time to bring the information regarding any positions to the School Committee for approval first. Mrs. Whalen said that going forward all positions should be approved first before putting individuals in any position.

Mr. Furtado thought this had been stated more than once; he is expecting that people do not go to work until approved by the School Committee; he asked what would happen if some consolidation takes place and the person hired on April 25th becomes displaced through secretaries bumping through seniority; what would be our exposure if a person were hired for a few weeks and then bumped out. He

personally would like to see this position filled by a long term sub through the end of the school year until we find out about consolidation.

Mrs. Whalen stated that there is something in the Secretaries contract that we must fill positions and she did not receive any information yet about consolidation, is not privy to information and does not think that decisions have been made yet.

Mary King explained that the world can't stop because of what might happen; there are issues to fill positions when they become vacant; if a person is out on leave, the position could be filled with a long term substitute. Mrs. Whalen would like to know if something different is expected regarding the need to fill a position which becomes vacant.

Dr. Cirillo stated that the potential vacancy with the Facilities Manager was put on School Spring and we received resumes. He knows there is a conversation about that being called sneaky; however, part of his responsibility is to fill potential openings as judiciously as possible and he will go forward, unless told not to, to best fill positions under contractual obligations and it then goes to School Committee after the fact for approval. In this case, a position due to retirement is being filled as quickly as possible; if School Committee wants to change that, they can, but he still has an organization to manage and have to fill positions within parameters of the contract; we would be taking a position away from the bargaining unit.

Motion to accept recommendations by Mr. Tellier, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Mr. Tsonos' opinion about filling the Facilities Manager position is that discussions have been taking place and with the financial condition of the city, he would prefer not to fill that position at this time until we find out a little bit more about where we are headed; that is where he is coming from on that vacancy and the advertising of that position.

Mrs. Rossi was concerned that we have a monumental \$30 million rehabilitation project of our schools underway and have no plan yet to actually consolidate with the city if it even takes place; with the construction already started, it makes her nervous to have \$30 Million of work in the air with no one to supervise.

Mr. Tsonos did not believe that \$30 million in work is floating out in the air; there is supervision; we hired someone to oversee the project; with the financial situation of the city and the things that lay ahead, he believes it prudent to hold off filling positions.

In response to Mrs. Abatecola's question regarding what role the Facilities Manager plays in the building project; Dr. Cirillo explained that the office provided documentation for the application for school bond construction and is instrumental in giving insight into what was

needed; since bond passage, the Facilities Manager is a member of the building committee and provides a level of oversight for the project.

The Superintendent explained that he has to manage a \$75million organization and until given a directive from the School Committee, he has a person retiring and to keep this position on hold for months would be a dereliction of his duties; the department should be fully complemented in moving ahead. He heard what the Mayor and City Council wants; however, he went ahead with the process to get the best person for the job and part of his management responsibility is to fill key positions with qualified individuals, until he is told otherwise by the School Committee.

Mr. Tsonos requested a motion that the Superintendent present recommendations to the School Committee prior to hiring a replacement for the Facilities position; however, he was satisfied that the Superintendent indicated he will not hire individuals until brought to the School Committee.

Requisitions – Bill List

Warrant #1086	4/18/11	\$	225.00
Warrant #1087	4/28/11	\$	13,247.21
Warrant #1088	4/28/11	\$	929,936.62
Warrant #1089	4/28/11	\$	822,757.35
Warrant #1090	4/28/11	\$	96,156.57

**Motion: Motion to approve by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Tellier.
Vote 5-0.**

Discussion: Mr. Furtado requested clarification of Warrant #1087; he asked Mary King to explain reimbursements to retirees for life insurance. Ms. King explained that several months ago under the direction of Mr. Barham, it was communicated to teachers that insurance would be increased to age related rates; however, it was later discovered that the increases were prohibited by state law; therefore, reimbursements were made to teachers who had paid the age related rates. The rate is whatever teachers are paying at time of retirement; however, the department is responsible for paying the age related rates.

Awarding of Bids – Mary King, Finance Director, recommended approval of a bid:

SmartBoard Technology - Mobile Smart Board for Kent Heights Library –(Title I funds)

Awarded to: Valley Communications Systems, Inc. \$4,797.00

Motion By Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mr. Furtado. Vote 5-0.

School Breakfast & Lunch Prices – Ms. King recommended approval of the following price increases in order to begin to comply with the Healthy, Hunger- Free Kids Act of 2010 (federal mandate); prices to take effect with the FY 2012 school year: Elementary Lunch \$2.25;

Secondary Lunch \$2.50; Elementary Breakfast \$1.10; Secondary Breakfast \$1.25; Adult Lunch \$3.50.

Motion by Mrs. Rossi to approve, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0. Mr. Furtado noted that the School Committee received a spreadsheet listing comparable prices from other districts and these new prices are still below other communities.

IV.A.1. School Calendar – Motion by Mr. Tellier to approve second passage of the revised policy, seconded by Mrs. Rossi. Vote 5-0

Resolution – Advertising Mandate – Mr. Furtado read a resolution to be sent to all East Providence legislators requesting removal of the costly mandate that School Committees must advertise meetings in newspapers of general circulation and to allow the publishing of agendas in local newspapers or electronically. Motion by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola. Vote 5-0.

Old Business

Mary King provided an update on the installation of food service equipment in the high school cafeteria; during school vacation, staff did a good job to complete the project; it is functioning and Chartwells is very pleased. She thanked employees who worked on Good Friday and Saturday to complete the project.

Consolidation Efforts –Mrs. Rossi requested that the School

Committee consider using a spreadsheet sample she provided; using one for each department individually, listing all employees in the department, what they do, hours, experience, certification, etc. She thought this would be an important step before agreeing to consolidate and whether or not money would be saved and if a better product would result from consolidation. Once completed by the school department, they could be matched up with city departments, then reviewed to see if it makes sense to consolidate any two departments. She would like to provide a copy to Mr. Andreoni and direct our Superintendent to take one department at a time to see if consolidation is worth doing, how much would be saved by consolidating and if the end product would be inferior or superior; we could then come up with savings for both the department and the tax payers efficiently without overwhelming individuals with data collection.

A motion was made by Mr. Furtado to bring the proposal to that committee; the Superintendent could start working on it now and complete by May 12 meeting. Discussion: Mr. Tsonos thought it had been decided already that the Superintendent and the City Manager would get together with their own information to make a plan. Mr. Tellier agreed that information is needed from employees in order to make informed decisions regarding consolidation efforts; this would help the School Committee and Dr. Cirillo regarding what they do and how they function in the School Department.

Dr. Cirillo said the meeting Monday night was beneficial; two groups are trying to come up with a solution to a difficult problem; he needs direction from the School Committee. He applauded Mrs. Rossi's effort to obtain information one department at a time to find out if consolidation is cost efficient and if it would produce a better product. He will do diligence to get the spread sheets filled out; the next step is to get the city side to do the same and then come up with concrete information and recommendations. It does not make sense to him to try to do all the departments at once; the School Department is internally reviewing all positions to determine if we have the right people doing the right jobs; then we can affiliate with the city. He applauded the School Committee's efforts and felt it was the right direction in order to get accurate information to share with the city and to put us in a good position to make the right decisions.

Mr. Tsonos asked about a completion date and when the first department will be done. Dr. Cirillo advised that the spread sheets can be completed with accurate information to share with the city and a report completed as soon as we can within a legitimate time frame.

Mr. Tellier thought if this sheet could get out to the departments and completed, the School Committee could then decide which department will be reviewed first; it should not take very long since some of the information was already listed in the PowerPoint presentations.

Dr. Cirillo – some areas lend this more easily than others and some

have more complexity than others such as contractual obligations; Finance and H/R are more complex; we need our house in order to be more efficient and focused; he would leave those and deal with the easiest first; he would make sure we have solid recommendations at every level for people who have to make the decisions. Mrs. Rossi – a good start would be to agree that Dr. Cirillo would begin with that format, reach out to Mr. Andreoni for the same information, and then match up with the city for a thirty day turn around.

Discussion about the spreadsheet form, obtaining information, which department would be first, and the time frame for completion.

Dr. Cirillo recommended organizing the data first and depending on what the data indicates, a recommendation could be made to the School Committee and City Council; a time frame could be discussed after review of levels of influence such as complexities of departments and contractual obligations.

Discussion: Mr. Tellier believed that all data could be collected in 30 days and that this would be a good place to start; Mrs. Rossi agreed. Mr. Furtado agreed that gathering data was most important before considering any consolidation. Mr. Tsonos expressed the need to set real and firm goals as far as making this a boiler plate to move forward with; we have to be specific about where we are going; no one is forcing tomorrow or 30 days; we are putting a budget together for next year and are faced with many other issues; he is supportive

of the Superintendent running the department, but he would like as much as possible in thirty days, at least the data collected.

Mrs. Rossi clarified that data would be collected on two departments within thirty days. Dr. Cirillo will analyze the form to make improvements; the first step is to make a decision to accept the format; he agrees data collection is essential; this is a monumental task and an outside company would probably analyze data, talk to people, compare data and make recommendations; consolidation cannot be done just for the sake of doing it; it must be done in way to provide us with data analysis, cost efficiencies and ability to produce a better product than we already have. He will be making recommendations on May 24th about central administration.

Mr. Tsonos agreed that the key person is the Superintendent and whatever format or process he chooses is fine; 30 day consolidation city wide is not going to happen; the Superintendent t has to be comfortable with whatever the process is and will make recommendations; at least we now have a direction to go in.

Construction Bonds – Mary King provided an update on the work being done and commented on the importance of the position of Facilities Manager. A new person will have to hit ground running; this very big undertaking will cross over two summers it is important for both she and Dr. Cirillo to have someone on the team to research and help make decisions; she implored the School Committee to take

the consolidation of the facilities oversight seriously, since we have a lot of buildings and issues.

Mary King reported on the ESCO bond through Johnson Controls: boiler upgrades have begun at Riverside & Martin Middle Schools, Whiteknact and Francis elementary schools; HVAC repairs have started at RMS and the high school; lighting installation will begin on 5/ 9; water conservation materials en route to begin 5/16; permitting finished up. \$15 million bond – bid posted on 5/9 for fire alarm improvements to start this summer. The project manager will provide an update at the June 14th meeting.

Deficit Reduction Plan –Dr. Cirillo has been involved in a subcommittee chaired by Mr. Conley; he thought Mr. Conley did an excellent job in outlining the mission of the subcommittee and an agreement was made to look at the current audited deficit and any additions over the next year to come up with solid figures in order to move forward and to look at ways to address the problem. Mr. Conley has set a 40 day deadline for a recommendation to the School Committee and City Council. Individuals have assignments to complete and he will report out at the next meeting. Mr. Tsonos stated that the meeting on May 12 is open to anyone who wishes to attend and Mr. Conley is receptive to comments and questions. Mr. Tsonos asked why a financial report was not included on the agenda this evening, since the issue is always if we are on target as far as expenditures and where we are supposed to be. Mary King advised

that we do not have a final decision on the Education Jobs Funds and we may lose funding of \$1.2 million; we are looking at other areas where there could be problems and at some other issues that could come up.

Mr. Tsonos believed that excellent things educationally are happening in the schools; he would like to see full day Kindergarten to help the children of the city; his concern is if revenue and expenditure figures are where they should be; the prior School Committee approved a budget knowing about at least a \$1.2 million hole after the last Governor told them not to plug that money into the budget and we are facing many challenges, but will continue to provide a first rate education.

New Business

Budget 2012 – Mary King advised that the budget is in the early stage; she met with principals to discuss the new process and sent the template out to them today. The budget is moving right on time. Discussion regarding open meetings with principals; Mrs. Rossi and Mr. Furtado will be meeting with Mary King and a plan will be in place shortly.

Discussion of Gifted Initiatives – Mr. Tsonos requested that Dr. Caswell provide information regarding what is possible to provide for our gifted students. Dr. Cirillo has background in this; he explained there are different approaches such as a School Wide Enrichment

Model; differentiation of education; to challenge kids at all levels in the classroom. Latest research is that teachers need to be trained to teach especially in the age of inclusion which adds another dimension. This is a complex issue; he will prepare a report for the Committee. Mrs. Rossi stated that East Providence had an excellent program and she would be very supportive of starting a program again.

Policy II.D.5. Use of School Buildings - Dr. Cirillo stated that the present policy does not give adequate definition regarding who can or cannot use our buildings; some are affiliated with us such as PTA, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, and these are child oriented programs. There are non-profits not affiliated with our mission such as Elks, Planned Parenthood, and religious organizations; we need to define organizations who can and cannot use our buildings and set up a fee structure. With the current policy, we cannot discriminate; he recommends upgrading the policy with the correct terminology. There is a need to address non-affiliated groups using our buildings. Andrew Thomas agreed with the Superintendent that if the buildings are open to outside organizations, we cannot discriminate; he will be glad to assist in revising the policy and the types of organizations which can use them.

Public Comment II – Mr. Ripka thanked everyone who worked on the Rebuilding America project. He requested that schools send thank you letters to Mr. Jim Miller, which would go a long way for

repeating the effort next year. Mr. Rossi thanked him and Tony for the hours of work they personally completed over and above any other volunteers, which was very appreciated by the School Committee.

Mr. Furtado related that parts of Oldham and Whiteknact were repainted, grounds were cleaned along with other work. Mrs. Rossi spoke about the amazing transformation at Oldham School; about 40 people performed work at that school which made a huge difference to the appearance of the school. She encouraged anyone to get involved and plan a project at their school. Dr. Cirillo was surprised at the level of enthusiasm and involvement in projects at these two schools and thanked Mr. Ripka and Tony for their hard work. Mr. Tellier and Mr. Furtado also thanked everyone for their hard work.

Tammy Entwhistle, a parent of a high school student, complained about the fact that her daughter had no proficiency portfolio in math and about poor communication from school to home. She claimed that many students are also having problems and that parents and students need to have a better understanding of the portfolio system. She wanted to make the Superintendent aware of the situation and let him know that parents need more information

Announcements – Mr. Furtado announced two events on May 21st: RIPIN walk and the K-Rob

Foundation event. Mrs. Abatecola is on the Wellness Committee and

announced that East Providence School Department will be awarded a worksite health award on 5/24/1.

Dr. Cirillo announced that the artwork of several high school students will be displayed at a gallery event on May 15th.

Motion by Mr. Furtado to move to Executive Session for purposes of discussing: Personnel - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (1); Collective Bargaining, and Litigation/Pending Litigation - R.I. Gen. Laws §42-46-5(a) (2), seconded by RT. Vote 5-0.

Return to Public Session

Report Executive Session Votes - None

Motion to seal the minutes of executive session and to adjourn by Mrs. Rossi, seconded by Mrs. Abatecola.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia A. Iannelli, Administrative Assistant

Stephen Furtado, Clerk of the Committee